

PRESS Release

For Immediate Release

Topic: Flu Vaccine Delays Preparation for Prevention
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Contact: Kelly Ann Shannon, 601/576-7667

State health officials remind Mississippians that influenza vaccine supplies will reach providers later than usual this year. The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) plans to reach those at high risk – the elderly, the chronically ill, and health care workers – with the flu vaccine despite delays.

“The first public health priority of influenza vaccination is not only Mississippi but across the nation is to help high risk people who choose to be vaccinated obtain vaccine to prevent the flu and complications related to the flu,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Mary Currier. “Flu vaccine is the best tool to prevent severe illness and death related to influenza among the elderly and chronically ill.”

The Mississippi State Department of Health expects to get influenza vaccine by early November. The vaccine will be available in clinics for the administration charge of \$6.

In June, flu vaccine manufacturers told federal public health officials to expect delays in flu vaccine shipments. The CDC has guaranteed the production of up to nine million doses of additional flu vaccine to make up for possible shortfalls experienced by some of the vaccine manufacturers.

The Food and Drug Administration estimates that 66 million doses will be available across the nation from manufacturers through normal production, plus nine million doses to be guaranteed by the CDC for a total of 75 million doses. The 75 million doses this flu season should meet the expected usual annual demand in the United States. During last year’s flu season in the United States, an estimated 74 million doses were distributed to providers from the 80 to 85 million doses produced.

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Flu Vaccine – Add 1

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met in late September to review recommendations about the timing and priority of flu vaccination in the United States for this upcoming flu season. The ACIP recommended the following: As vaccine first becomes available, vaccination efforts should be focused on people at high risk of complications associated with influenza disease and on health care workers. Health care workers should be vaccinated to stop the potential spread of the flu. These efforts should continue into December and later, as long as influenza vaccine is available.

Mississippi's public health agency recommends the influenza vaccine for those who are at high risk from influenza complications:

- # anyone 65 years and older
- # Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities that house people of any age who have chronic medical conditions
- # Adults and children who have chronic disorders of the pulmonary cardiovascular systems, including asthma
- # Adults and children who have required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the past year because of chronic metabolic disease (including diabetes mellitus), kidney dysfunction, blood disorders, or immunosuppression (e.g., caused by medications or HIV)
- # Children and teenagers – aged 6 months to 18 years – who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and therefore might be at risk for developing Reye syndrome after influenza infection
- # Women who will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season.

ACIP recommends pneumococcal vaccines for many of the same high risk people. Pneumococcal vaccine should be administered when indicated even if influenza vaccine is not yet available. Pneumococcal vaccination is not a substitute for influenza vaccination.

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“The degree of delay for individual providers will vary, depending on the vaccine manufacturer, distributor, and when vaccine was ordered,” said Currier. “Mississippi’s flu season does not usually begin until January, so we urge those who are at high risk to remain patient but persistent as they work with their health care provider to obtain their annual flu vaccination.”

At the same time, CDC will be working with state, industry and health systems to help providers obtain vaccine for high risk people. The public and private communities will continue to work closely together to ensure the availability of influenza vaccine for the season and to minimize the adverse impact of delays. More information about influenza disease and the vaccine is on the CDC Web site – www.cdc.gov.

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